UNITED
NATIONS A

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dist.
GENERAL

A/C.5/53/20
20 October 1998

Original: ENGLISH/FRENCH

Fifty-third session
FIFTH COMMITTEE

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NOTE: Les délégtions sont priées d'envoyer leur corrections à la présente liste, par écrit, au Secrétaire de la Commission, bureau S-2633, bâtiment du Secrétariat, téléphone (212)963-8255, fax (212)963-0360.

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United Nations A/C.5/53/21

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 October 1998
English
Original: Spanish

Fifty-third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 118
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 6 October 1998 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith for appropriate action by the Fifth Committee a letter dated 5 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations, which contains a request for an exception to the application of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations (see annex).

(*Signed*) Didier **Opertti**

98-29491 (E) 061098 061098

Annex

Letter dated 5 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: English]

In view of the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly in which my country intends to actively participate in order to make its own contribution to the implementation of the ideals of the United Nations, to which the people of Guinea-Bissau are profoundly attached, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that my country, for reasons which are beyond its control, is currently unable to meet its financial obligations towards the Organization.

As you are aware, there is an armed conflict going on in Guinea-Bissau. As a consequence of this tragedy, the banks, financial institutions and government offices have been closed for the last four months. The Government is unable to ensure the payment of salaries to civil servants and to pay its contribution to the United Nations.

We remain committed to meeting our obligations in the long run, as soon as the situation in normalized. However, in the circumstances described above, we are requesting your assistance in securing the vote during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, as an exception to the application of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

(*Signed*) Alfredo **Lopes Cabral**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations A/C.5/53/22

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 October 1998
English
Original: Spanish

Fifty-third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 118
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 6 October 1998 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith for appropriate action by the Fifth Committee a letter dated 2 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations, which contains a request for an exception to the application of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations (see annex).

(Signed) Didier **Opertti**

98-29534 (E) 061098 061098

Annex

Letter dated 2 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: English]

As you may know, in order to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations, Georgia has to make a payment in the amount of US$ 2,853,600.

Since Georgia's admission to membership of the United Nations, the Government of Georgia has always made an effort not to fail in timely making its contribution to the Organization.

The problems of the economic transition have proved to be a heavy burden on the country's economy. Despite ongoing reforms and growth of the economic indicators, the Government of Georgia was compelled to reallocate the funds from its budget initially intended for international organizations to the urgent needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons.

Despite acute financial problems, the Government of Georgia is making every effort to carry out its financial obligations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. A decision has been adopted to cover the minimal amount of indebtedness in the near future.

Proceeding from the above and with a view to making possible the full functioning of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations, namely, its participation in the elections to the important bodies of the United Nations, to be held in October, we request that the Fifth Committee discuss the possibility of granting Georgia the right to vote, before such payment is made.

(Signed) Peter **Chkheidze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations A/C.5/53/23

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 October 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 118
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 9 October 1998 from the Acting President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith for appropriate action by the Fifth Committee a letter dated 8 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, which contains a request for an exception to the application of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations (see annex).

(*Signed*) Percy Metsing **Mangoaela**
Acting President

98-30027 (E) 091098

Annex

Letter dated 8 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Bosnia and Herzegovina, now for the second year, has lost its right to vote in the General Assembly due to a lack of funds to pay its dues. As it is for all countries, our ability to participate in the major decisions of the General Assembly as an active member of the United Nations family is most important. However, in view of the attempts by some to subdue our sovereignty and territorial integrity during the recent war, it is even more important that Bosnia and Herzegovina be able to fully participate in providing confidence to our population regarding the country's political health. In essence, our immediate full participation in this session of the General Assembly is essential to peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is an integral part of the peace process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is in arrears under the terms of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations, in the amount of US$ 1,081,100, and this amount soon will increase. Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently in arrears in an amount in excess of US$ 10 million to all major multilateral institutions.

The lack of funding necessary to pay such dues, can be attributed, in short, to the devastating conditions left by the war, an emphasis on rebuilding, caring for war invalids, and other social costs of the consequences of the war, and the large number of refugees and displaced persons. Needless to say, we can continue with this long list of needs and inflicted injuries.

Finally, for easy reference, Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations reads:

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the proceeding two full years. *The General Assembly may, nevertheless, permit such a Member to vote if it is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member*" (emphasis added).

(*Signed*) Muhamed **Sacirbey**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations

United Nations A/C.5/53/24

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 October 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 118
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 14 October 1998 from the Acting President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith for appropriate action by the Fifth Committee a letter dated 12 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, which contains a request for an exception to the application of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

(*Signed*) Percy Metsing **Mangoaela**
Acting President

98-30504 (E) 141098

Annex

Letter dated 12 October 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Congo to the United Nations

I wish to bring your attention to the issue of my country's arrears in its contribution to the United Nations budget. As you may know, the Republic of the Congo is gradually recovering from a civil war that destroyed the production infrastructure, mainly the banking system, and ruined the economy. Besides, the Government is facing legal suits from armament dealers who claim the Government should pay for the armaments orders of the former authorities, and some legal courts in Paris are blocking financial transactions between my country and any foreign country.

Because of our deep commitment to full participation in all United Nations activities, I appeal to you to issue an exemption from the provisions of Article 19 for the Republic of the Congo, as has been done for such countries as Guinea-Bissau, Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, while I continue to pressure the Congolese authorities to meet their duties.

(*Signed*) Henri Blaise **Gotienne**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

United Nations

A/C.5/53/25

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 October 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 113
Programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999

United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala: performance report for the period 1 January to 31 December 1998

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains the preliminary financial performance of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for the period 1 January to 31 December 1998. Prior to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 52/175 of 18 December 1997, a statement of the programme budget implications (A/C.5/52/21 and Add.1) was submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly. In the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/52/707), the Advisory Committee expressed the opinion that a performance report should be presented by the end of 1998 to allow better monitoring of the resources appropriated for MINUGUA.

The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/221 A of 22 December 1997, *inter alia*, approved an appropriation of $36,523,000 under section 3 (Peacekeeping operations and special missions) of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999. In the same resolution, the Assembly also approved an appropriation of $2,348,100 under section 32 (Staff assessment), offset by a corresponding amount in the estimates of income under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

Expenditures for the period 1 January to 31 December 1998 are estimated at $31,515,000 net ($34,192,500 gross), resulting in an estimated unencumbered balance of $5,008,000 under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, partly offset by over-expenditures of $329,400 under section 32, with a corresponding increase in income from staff assessment.

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The unencumbered balance results mainly from salaries, common staff costs and monthly mission allowance of staff due to vacancies experienced to date. To a lesser extent, savings were also achieved under transport and air operations.

The action to be taken by the General Assembly, as indicated in section IV (Conclusions and recommendations), would be to take note of the present report and take into account the estimated reduction of $4,678,600 gross ($5,008,000 net of staff assessment) during its consideration of the programme budget implications statement anticipated to be submitted to the General Assembly in respect of a draft resolution which it would consider if it wished to extend the mandate of MINUGUA.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 51/198 B of 27 March 1997, the General Assembly decided to authorize the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for one year, that is, until 31 March 1998 to carry out international verification of the Peace Agreements in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General (see A/51/828). The structure of the Mission for the period 1 April 1997 to 31 March 1998 is contained in the statement of the programme budget implications (A/C.5/51/47), submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly prior to its adoption of resolution 51/198 B.

2. For the period 1 January to 31 March 1998, provisions were requested in the initial proposals of the Secretary-General under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, including resources related to 328 staff positions consisting of 129 international staff: 71 at the Professional level and above (one D-2, two D-1, 10 P-5, 23 P-4, 29 P-3 and six P-2) and 58 in the General Service and related categories (12 Field Service and 46 General Service); and 199 local staff. In addition, there were resource requests for 106 United Nations Volunteers; 17 military liaison officers and 38 civilian police observers.

3. In resolution 52/175 of 18 December 1997, the Assembly decided to authorize the renewal of the mandate of the Mission from 1 April to 31 December 1998. The revised structure of the Mission is contained in the statement of the programme budget implications (A/C.5/52/21 and Add.1) submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly prior to the adoption of resolution 52/175. For the period 1 April to 31 December 1998, based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the General Assembly approved the revised structure of the Mission with the corresponding resources and related operational costs. The revised structure consists of 362 staff positions consisting of 133 international staff: 82 at the Professional level and above (one D-2, two D-1, nine P-5, 26 P-4, 39 P-3 and five P-2) and 51 in the General Service and related categories (10 Field Service and 41 General Service); and 229 staff at the local level. There were also resources for 98 United Nations Volunteers; 20 military liaison officers and 51 civilian police observers.

II. Implementation of the budget

4. Information on the operations of MINUGUA and on the situation on the ground during the period under review is contained in reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/53/315 of 31 August 1998, A/53/288 of 24 August 1998, A/52/946 of 15 June 1998 and A/52/554 of 31 October 1997).

III. Performance report for the period 1 January to 31 December 1998

5. As indicated in table 1 below, from the 1998 appropriation of $36,523,000 net ($38,871,100 gross) covering two mandate periods of the Mission, expenditures and obligations are estimated at $31,515,000 net ($34,192,500 gross). The resulting estimated unencumbered balance of $5,008,000 net ($4,678,600 gross), represents in net terms 13.7 per cent of the amount appropriated (or 12 per cent gross of the amount appropriated). Annex I to the present report contains the financial performance information for the reporting period

by main object of activity, with supplementary information on significant variances presented in annex II.

Table 1
Appropriation and expenditure

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Category of expenditure	*Appropriation*	*Expenditure*	*Variance*
Military personnel costs	716.0	721.3	(5.3)
Civilian personnel costs	26 124.6	22 165.0	3 959.6
Operational costs	9 304.2	8 313.9	990.3
Other programmes	378.2	314.8	63.4
Programme support	0.0	0.0	0.0
Staff assessment	2 348.1	2 677.5	(329.4)
Total	**38 871.1**	**34 192.5**	**4 678.6**
Income from staff assessment	(2 348.1)	(2 677.5)	329.4
Net requirements	**36 523.0**	**31 515.0**	**5 008.0**
Voluntary contributions	5 566.0	4 736.8	829.2
Total resources	**42 089.0**	**36 251.8**	**5 837.2**

Table 2
Authorized staffing, incumbency and vacancy rates for the military and civilian personnel for the period 1 January to 31 December 1998

Category	*Period 1 January to 31 December 1998*	*Authorized strength*	*Actual strength (average)*	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*
Military liaison officers	1/1/98–31/3/98	17	16	5.9
	1/4/98–31/12/98	20	18	10.0
Civilian police observers	1/1/98–31/3/98	38	34	10.5
	1/4/98–31/12/98	51	48	5.9
International staff	1/1/98–31/3/98	129	110	14.7
	1/4/98–31/12/98	133	118	11.3
Local staff	1/1/98–31/3/98	199	198	0.5
	1/4/98–31/12/98	229	214	6.6

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

6. The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report and take into account the estimated reduction of $4,678,600 gross ($5,008,000 net of staff assessment) during its consideration of the programme budget implications statement anticipated to be submitted to the General Assembly in respect of a draft resolution which it would consider if it wished to extend the mandate of MINUGUA.

Annex I

Preliminary performance for the period 1 January to 31 December 1998

(Thousands of United States dollars)

	(1) Appropriation 1 January to 31 December 1998	(2) Non-recurrent expenditures	(3) Recurrent expenditures	(4) Total expenditures (2) + (3)	(5) Unliquidated obligations	(6) Savings (overruns) (1) - (4)
1. Military personnel costs						
(a) Military observers						
Mission subsistence allowance	603.4		589.7	589.7	30.7	13.7
Travel costs	55.8		74.8	74.8		(19.0)
Clothing and equipment allowance						
Subtotal	**659.2**	**0.0**	**664.5**	**664.5**	**30.7**	**(5.3)**
(b) Other costs pertaining to military personnel						
Contingent-owned equipment						
Death and disability compensation	56.8		56.8	56.8		
Subtotal	**56.8**		**56.8**	**56.8**		
Total, line 1	**716.0**	**0.0**	**721.3**	**721.3**	**30.7**	**(5.3)**
2. Civilian personnel costs						
(a) Civilian police						
Mission subsistence allowance	1 494.3		1 416.9	1 416.9		77.4
Travel costs	132.0		139.4	139.4	27.7	(7.4)
Clothing and equipment allowance						
Death and disability compensation						
Subtotal	**1 626.3**	**0.0**	**1 556.3**	**1 556.3**	**27.7**	**70.0**
(b) International and local staff						
International staff salaries	8 363.4		5 944.0	5 944.0		2 419.4
Local staff salaries	2 801.4		2 516.6	2 516.6		284.8
General temporary assistance						
Consultants			6.0	6.0		(6.0)
Overtime			70.0	70.0		(70.0)
Common staff costs	4 265.2		4 067.3	4 067.3	36.5	197.9
Mission subsistence allowance	4 093.2		3 645.4	3 645.4		447.8
Other travel costs	167.2		172.4	172.4	10.1	(5.2)
Subtotal	**19 690.4**	**0.0**	**16 421.7**	**16 421.7**	**46.6**	**3 268.7**

	(1) Appropriation 1 January to 31 December 1998	(2) Non-recurrent expenditures	(3) Recurrent expenditures	(4) Total expenditures (2) + (3)	(5) Unliquidated obligations	(6) Savings (overruns) (1) - (4)
(c) International contractual personnel	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(d) United Nations Volunteers	4 807.9	0.0	4 187.0	4 187.0	650.0	620.9
Subtotal	**4 807.9**	**0.0**	**4 187.0**	**4 187.0**	**650.0**	**620.9**
Total, line 2	**26 124.6**	**0.0**	**22 165.0**	**22 165.0**	**724.3**	**3 959.6**
3. Premises/accommodation						
Rental of premises	693.4		685.9	685.9	220.9	7.5
Alterations and renovations to premises	107.1		95.0	95.0	3.9	12.1
Maintenance supplies	46.2		37.0	37.0	2.1	9.2
Maintenance services	80.3		80.3	80.3	2.7	0.0
Utilities	141.3		128.1	128.1	0.6	13.2
Security and cleaning services	571.8		554.3	554.3	227.9	17.5
Total, line 3	**1 640.1**	**0.0**	**1 580.6**	**1 580.6**	**458.1**	**59.5**
4. Transport operations						
Purchase of vehicles	3 059.0	2 510.2		2 510.2	2 158.5	548.8
Rental of vehicles	12.1		7.0	7.0		5.1
Spare parts, repairs and maintenance	483.2		449.0	449.0	106.0	34.2
Petrol, oil and lubricants	293.1		270.0	270.0	132.3	23.1
Insurance	32.5		32.5	32.5	13.4	0.0
Total, line 4	**3 879.9**	**2 510.2**	**758.5**	**3 268.7**	**2 410.2**	**611.2**
5. Air operations						
Helicopter/aircraft operations						0.0
Hire/charter costs	1 849.4		1 453.1	1 453.1	782.9	396.3
Aviation fuel and lubricants						0.0
Positioning/depositioning costs			160.0	160.0		(160.0)
Painting/preparation						0.0
Liability and war risk insurance						0.0
Air crew subsistence allowance						0.0
Air traffic control services and equipment						0.0
Landing fees and ground handling						0.0
Fuel storage containers						0.0
Total, line 5	**1 849.4**	**0.0**	**1 613.1**	**1 613.1**	**782.9**	**236.3**
6. Communications						
(a) Complementary communications						
Communications equipment, acquisition	141.5	188.1		188.1		(46.6)

	(1) Appropriation 1 January to 31 December 1998	(2) Non-recurrent expenditures	(3) Recurrent expenditures	(4) Total expenditures (2) + (3)	(5) Unliquidated obligations	(6) Savings (overruns) (1) - (4)
Spare parts and supplies/maintenance	186.2		121.0	121.0		65.2
Workshop and test equipment				0.0		0.0
Commercial communications	288.0		288.0	288.0	48.4	0.0
Subtotal	**615.7**	**188.1**	**409.0**	**597.1**	**48.4**	**18.6**
(b) Main trunking contract						0.0
Total, line 6	**615.7**	**188.1**	**409.0**	**597.1**	**48.4**	**18.6**
7. Other equipment						
Office furniture	50.6	50.0		50.0		0.6
Office and other equipment	108.2	186.8		186.8	35.6	(78.6)
Data-processing equipment	459.9	538.5		538.5		(78.6)
Other equipment				0.0		0.0
Spare parts, repairs and maintenance	250.2		80.4	80.4	4.2	169.8
Total, line 7	**868.9**	**775.3**	**80.4**	**855.7**	**39.8**	**13.2**
8. Supplies and services						
(a) Miscellaneous services						
Contractual services				0.0		0.0
Medical treatment and services			12.5	12.5		(12.5)
Official hospitality	6.3		4.3	4.3		2.0
Miscellaneous other services	129.1		101.3	101.3	7.4	27.8
Subtotal	**135.4**	**0.0**	**118.1**	**118.1**	**7.4**	**17.3**
(b) Miscellaneous supplies						
Stationery and office supplies			51.1	51.1	2.3	(51.1)
Medical supplies			16.7	16.7	0.6	(16.7)
Sanitation and cleaning materials			10.7	10.7	3.4	(10.7)
Subscriptions			11.7	11.7	3.2	(11.7)
Electrical supplies			20.0	20.0	1.2	(20.0)
Electronic data-processing supplies			55.6	55.6	19.3	(55.6)
Miscellaneous other supplies			71.4	71.4		(71.4)
Supplies and materials	252.2			0.0		252.2
Subtotal	**252.2**	**0.0**	**237.2**	**237.2**	**30.0**	**15.0**
Total, line 8	**387.6**	**0.0**	**355.3**	**355.3**	**37.4**	**32.3**
9. Public information programmes						
Publications				0.0		0.0
Promotion				0.0		0.0

	(1) Appropriation 1 January to 31 December 1998	(2) Non-recurrent expenditures	(3) Recurrent expenditures	(4) Total expenditures (2) + (3)	(5) Unliquidated obligations	(6) Savings (overruns) (1) - (4)
Contractual services				0.0		0.0
Public information production costs	378.2		314.8	314.8		63.4
Total, line 9	**378.2**	**0.0**	**314.8**	**314.8**	**0.0**	**63.4**
10. Training programmes	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
11. Air and surface freight						
Commercial freight and cartage	62.6		43.4	43.4	27.1	19.2
Other	0.0			0.0	0.0	0.0
Total, line 11	**62.6**	**0.0**	**43.4**	**43.4**	**27.1**	**19.2**
12. Programme support	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
13. Staff assessment	**2 348.1**		**2 677.5**	**2 677.5**	**0.0**	**(329.4)**
Total, lines 1-13	**38 871.1**	**3 473.6**	**30 718.9**	**34 192.5**	**4 558.9**	**4 678.6**
14. Income from staff assessment	**2 348.1**	**0.0**	**2 677.5**	**2 677.5**	**0.0**	**(329.4)**
Net requirements	**36 523.0**	**3 473.6**	**28 041.4**	**31 515.0**	**4 558.9**	**5 008.0**
15. Voluntary contributions	**5 566.0**		**4 736.8**	**4 736.8**	**0.0**	**829.2**
Total resources	**42 089.0**	**3 473.6**	**32 778.2**	**36 251.8**	**4 558.9**	**5 837.2**

Annex II

Supplementary explanation of significant variances

Civilian personnel costs

Appropriation: $26,124,600; expenditure: $22,165,000; variance: $3,959,600

1. The estimated unutilized balance of $3,959,600 is attributable to reduced requirements under civilian police observers ($70,000), international and local staff ($3,268,700) and United Nations Volunteers ($620,900).

Civilian police

Appropriation: $1,626,300; expenditure: $1,556,300; variance: $70,000

2. Estimated savings under civilian police observers reflect reductions of $77,400 under monthly mission allowance, partly offset by additional requirements of $7,400 under travel. Effective 1 April 1998, the authorized strength was established at 51 civilian police observers. As at 31 July 1998, the average number of civilian police observers on the ground was 48, thereby reducing requirements under mission subsistence and clothing allowances per month. Under travel, estimated additional requirements reflect the increased cost of travel of military observers from $3,000 to $3,400. In addition, it was originally estimated that there would be 21 rotations for the period 1 January to 31 March 1998 and 23 rotations for the period 31 March to 31 December 1998, for a total of 44 rotations. In the first half of the year, 22 civilian police observers rotated; and it is anticipated that travel related to 19 rotations would take place between July and December, for a total of 41 rotations. The increased cost of travel is partly offset by the lower number of rotations budgeted. The net effect of these variances resulted in a reduction of $70,000.

International and local staff

Appropriation: $19,690,400; expenditure: $16,421,700; variance: $3,268,700

3. Provisions were made under general temporary assistance for the period 1 January to 31 March 1998 for 328 staff (129 at the international level and 199 at the local level). While the actual overall vacancy rate of 5.6 per cent is just slightly higher than the 5 per cent turnover factor applied to all staff, the average strength of international staff was 111, reflecting a vacancy rate of 13.7 per cent. For the balance of 1998, provisions were made for 133 international staff and 229 staff at the local level, inclusive of a 10 per cent vacancy rate for international staff and 5 per cent for staff at the local level. Overall vacancy rates of 12.8 per cent and 9.2 per cent are projected for international and local staff, respectively. Of the 12.8 per cent vacancy rate for international staff, 15.4 per cent relates to the Professional category and above and 8.6 per cent to the General Service and related categories. In addition, a very high number of mission appointees is projected for the Mission, namely, 71 Professional staff out of 82 authorized for the period 1 April to 31 December 1998. Correspondingly, as a result of a higher than estimated vacancy rate for international staff, a reduction in the amount of $447,800 is estimated under mission subsistence allowance.

United Nations Volunteers

Appropriation: $4,807,900; expenditure: $4,187,000; variance: $620,900

4. Estimated savings of $620,900 projected under United Nations Volunteers is due mainly to the decrease in average monthly cost of volunteers, namely, from $4,200 to $3,600. The decrease in average monthly cost reflects the situation whereby most of the volunteers in MINUGUA come from countries in the area, thereby reducing the travel element in the unit rate per volunteer.

Operational costs

Appropriation: $9,304,200; expenditure: $8,313,900; variance: $990,300

5. The projected savings relate mainly to reduced requirements under transport operations ($611,200) and air operations ($236,300).

Transport operations

Appropriation: $3,879,900; expenditure: $3,268,700; variance: $611,200

6. A saving in the amount of $548,800 was realized under acquisition of vehicles due to the lower actual cost of vehicles purchased than that used in the standards. Due to significant savings, the Mission purchased a forklift truck, thereby reducing requirements under rental of vehicles by $5,100. Other estimated savings reflect a lower than anticipated cost of repairs due to fewer accidents per vehicle than originally anticipated ($34,200); and a lower cost of petrol, oil and lubricants ($23,100).

Air operations

Appropriation: $1,849,400; expenditure: $1,613,100; variance: $236,300

7. Under air operations, differences between the assumptions used in the preparation of the budget and actual contractual arrangements entered into were the main factors contributing to the projected reduction of $236,300. These differences are outlined below.

8. Under helicopter operations, provisions were approved for the rental of a helicopter at a fixed monthly rate of $111,500 for 60 flying hours per month, inclusive of all charges. Effective contractual arrangements with the carrier, however, consisted of a fixed monthly rate of $79,212 for 20 flying hours, plus positioning and depositioning costs of $100,000 and insurance costs of $4,000.

9. Under aircraft operations, provisions were made for the rental of an aircraft at a fixed monthly rate of $27,000 for 60 flying hours; 10 monthly additional hours at a monthly rate of $1,206 and insurance of $8,000 per month ($168,000). Effective contractual arrangements with the carrier, however, consisted of a fixed monthly rate of $32,100 for 10 additional hours per month at a rate of $1,100 and insurance of $4,000 for the period.

United Nations A/C.5/53/26

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 October 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 113
Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

Letter dated 12 October 1998 from the Chairman of the Committee on Information to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, had requested that a report on integration of United Nations information centres with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

This issue was brought to the attention of the members of the Bureau of the Committee on Information at the meeting held on 4 September 1998. Subsequently, the members of the Bureau, having sought the views of their regional and substantive groups on the matter, reported on the consensus among the membership that an important policy issue such as integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of UNDP should first be carefully considered by the Committee before being considered by the General Assembly.

Accordingly, the report requested in General Assembly resolution 52/220 will be prepared for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-first session in 1999. Following due deliberations on the report, the Committee will submit its recommendations to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

(*Signed*) José Alberto **De Sousa**
Chairman
Committee on Information

98-31082 (E) 191098

United Nations A/C.5/53/27

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 October 1998

Original: English

Fifty third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 120
United Nations common system

Comments by the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General transmits herewith for consideration by the Fifth Committee a document submitted by the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) (see annex). The document has been submitted pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 2 (b) of General Assembly resolution 35/213 of 17 December 1980, whereby the Assembly reiterated its readiness to receive and consider fully the view of the staff as set out by a designated representative of FICSA in a document submitted through the Secretary-General.

98-31570 (E) 281098

Annex

Document submitted by the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations

I. Introduction

1. The Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) appreciates the opportunity to address the Fifth Committee, to make its concerns known to the representatives of United Nations Member States and to seek their support on common system issues.

2. A summary of the Federation's positions on the recommendations and decisions of the International Civil Service Commission is contained in the appendix. A more detailed explanation is set out below of FICSA positions on several key issues: the consultative process in ICSC, the audit report on the ICSC secretariat, safety and security of staff, reform, conditions of service, recognition of language knowledge and ethics in the international organizations.

II. Consultative process

3. FICSA participated in good faith in the ICSC Working Group on the Consultative Process and Working Arrangements, having shared in the drafting of the terms of reference, selection of a facilitator and drafting of the report. While maintaining its boycott of ICSC, FICSA was present as an observer during the discussions of the report of the Working Group by the Commission.

4. As can be seen from the report of the Working Group (see A/53/30, annex II), some progress has been made on strengthening the consultative process through revisions to the rules of procedure governing agenda-setting, working methods and reporting. However, the latter section of the report, dealing with the maintenance of a high-quality, well-respected Commission, requires consideration by the Member States at the current session of the General Assembly.

5. FICSA strongly believes that the key factor in ensuring the Commission's competence, impartiality and independence is its composition. If the functioning of the Commission is to improve, FICSA believes it is essential that the selection process for members of the Commission be broadened to include a greater number of candidates for each vacant position; that candidatures be put forward by the Member States, the administrations and the staff; that selection be based on recognized competencies; and, to the extent possible, the process be made less political. In this light, the administrations and staff put forward the proposals set out below (see appendix V of the report of the Working Group, on the selection and appointment of members of the Commission).

6. In expansion of article 3 of the Statute of the Commission, which sets out "recognized competence" as the first criterion for membership, the need to identify basic competencies was agreed on by the administrations and the staff. With regard to the process of selection, the Federation favours changing the current statute to requiring nominations from the three parties concerned – Member States, executive heads and staff – but could accept alternatives, such as the creation of a consultative committee comprising the three parties to identify and propose candidates, or timely preparation by ACC, in consultation with Member States and staff representatives, of a roster of candidates that would serve as the sole source of nominees for membership to the Commission. In keeping with the spirit of renewal, the number of terms of service of Commissioners should be limited.

7. Regrettably, the experience of the Commission's discussion of this section of the report of the Working Group was discouraging. It served to confirm some of the shortcomings that the Working Group had tried to redress. The proposal for a list of basic competencies was not considered objectively. Rather, it was perceived as a criticism of serving Commissioners and their election. This had not been the intention of the proposal. The result was that the Commission concluded that the criteria specified in article 3 of its statute were sufficient.

8. FICSA is more than ever convinced that restoration of full confidence in the Commission requires not only a review of the working arrangements of the Commission but also its composition. FICSA therefore notes with appreciation the initiative of the Secretary-General in asking a small, geographically-balanced review group to examine the mandate, membership and functioning of the Commission; the group will submit its report to the Secretary-General no later than November 1999. However, the Federation trusts that the establishment of the review group will not delay consideration of the joint staff/administration proposals on the selection of commissioners. Each initiative originated for a different purpose. The efforts of the Working Group

were directed at strengthening the consultative process. The initiative of the Secretary-General is to examine the mandate of ICSC within the context of the reform programme.

9. In view of the efforts dedicated by the members of the Working Group in 1998 to the question of consultation at the international level, FICSA requests Member States to adopt a position, at the current fifty-third session of the General Assembly, on the joint staff/administration proposals contained in appendix V of the report of the Working Group, on the selection and appointment of members of the Commission.

III. Audit review of the secretariat of the International Civil Service Commission

10. In general, FICSA believes that the report is not so much an audit of the functioning of the ICSC secretariat as a review of the United Nations salary system. However, the report confirms the Federation's view that ICSC is not functioning in the most efficient or effective way. FICSA notes that article 8.1 of the ICSC Statute states that "The Chairman shall direct the work of the Commission and its staff", which presumably also includes the secretariat. FICSA cannot comment on the work of the secretariat staff; the prevailing view in the Federation is that the problems lie with the Commission rather than with the competencies of the staff of the secretariat.

11. Specific technical comments are included in FICSA's detailed position paper on the audit report, which will be distributed to the Fifth Committee as a separate document.

IV. Safety and security of staff

12. FICSA initiatives in this area include pressing for an abridged version of the field security handbook for distribution to all staff, action in favour of the evacuation of locally recruited staff and effective security training.

13. FICSA notes with appreciation the efforts of the Security Council at its current session to improve protection for humanitarian workers. A total of 153 United Nations staff, international and local, have been killed since 1992. In his report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General states that while compliance with the rules of international law in conflict has long been a problem, the situation has dramatically worsened in recent years due to the changing pattern of conflicts. In situations of internal conflicts, for example, it is often difficult to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. Many conflicts have become particularly violent and complex due to involvement of irregular militia, foreign mercenaries, child soldiers and others with little knowledge of or respect for international law.

14. It is within this context that FICSA wishes to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the distinction made in the field security handbook between internationally and nationally recruited staff and the provision of different degrees of protection for each. According to an independent legal study commissioned by FICSA on the safety and security problems faced by international civil servants carrying out activities in the fulfilment of a United Nations mandate, such distinction is illegal. It should not exist because the danger to which the United Nations staff are subject does not differ according to recruitment status. For example, relocation or evacuation of locally recruited staff during phases 3, 4 and 5 may only take place if these staff are in danger by virtue of their employment with a United Nations organization. However, in times of crisis, it is very difficult and sometimes impossible to differentiate between the different categories of staff. Most staff are targeted because they are international civil servants working in an office or driving a vehicle that bears the United Nations flag. The legal study will be made available to the Fifth Committee as a separate document.

15. FICSA is requesting that the distinction between locally and internationally recruited staff for the purposes of protection be removed. This request is in accordance with article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which calls for equal protection of law and protection against discrimination.

V. Reform

16. Most if not all of the organizations of the common system have introduced reforms in response to a perceived need for greater coherence and relevance to the changing global context. While welcoming efforts to refine and redefine organizational mandates, staff nevertheless noticed with concern how reform appeared synonymous with cutting costs and staff. FICSA thus noted with satisfaction the Secretary-General's statement that reform is not intrinsically an exercise in cutting costs or reducing staff. It is an exercise to assure the Organization's relevance in a changing world and to make sure that those mandates that are given to it by its 185 Member States are performed effectively and

efficiently with...n the resources that are appropriated for those ends.

17. As organizations proceed along the path of reform, FICSA believes that change should be guided by the following notions: (a) staff should be treated fairly and equitably; (b) because we are all walking on new ground with regard to reform, we should proceed with caution to ensure that changes that have an important impact will not need to be reversed in several years time; and (c) all changes must respect the principles spelled out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Above all, the common system should not lose sight of its humanitarian aims.

18. FICSA is concerned that under pressure to reform, administrations may go too far too fast. We are concerned, for example, with the misuse of assignments of limited duration. We are concerned with the use of volunteers or gratis personnel to make savings on staff costs. We are concerned that the variety of contracts used to give administrations increased flexibility may contravene the right of employees to equal pay for work of equal value. We are concerned that outsourcing may weaken, not strengthen, organizations' ability to deliver programmes, and will not lead to the intended savings. We are concerned that the drive for flexibility and streamlining may result in a loss of controls necessary to safeguard the mission of United Nations system organizations. We are concerned about the independence of the international civil service as it moves towards closer partnerships with the private sector.

VI. Conditions of service

19. While the Member States have acknowledged that Professional salaries are no longer competitive and that the current comparator is no longer the best paid national civil service, no action has been taken to redress the situation. The adjustment of 2.48 per cent recommended by the International Civil Service Commission, if approved, will be absorbed by consolidating post adjustment multiplier points into the base salary on a no loss-no gain basis. FICSA believes that Professional salaries should be increased in real terms by 25 per cent to compensate for the loss of purchasing power over the past 15 years. FICSA would request the Fifth Committee to increase the margin range, with immediate application of a new mid-point of 125, in accordance with Assembly resolution 52/216 of 22 December 1997, in which the General Assembly acknowledged its option of margin management.

20. With regard to the Flemming principle, the latest revisions to the methodology for General Service salary surveys will make it more difficult to ensure that General Service salaries are equivalent to the best prevailing salaries in the duty station. It should be recalled that during the last round of surveys, General Service salaries were frozen in many headquarters duty stations for several years, with an equally devastating effect on pensions. Some duty stations are just recovering from that situation, yet under the revised methodology they risk being subjected to another freeze. Should this be the case, the message to the General Service staff will be clear: they are to bear the largest part of the burden of the financial constraints of the organizations. FICSA insists that the Flemming principle be fully respected and implemented as originally conceived.

21. With regard to the General Service staff in non-headquarters duty stations, FICSA notes that United Nations administrators for field duty stations now openly recognize that they are facing increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified General Service staff due to the lack of competitivity of United Nations system salaries. FICSA also draws attention to the damaging inconsistencies between the non-headquarters salary survey methodology as drafted by ICSC and its application as prescribed in the CCAQ manual. Particularly hard hit by the revisions are those duty stations that have experienced the very negative effects of regional economic crises. For example, the CCAQ manual provisions on the application of special measures require 50 per cent devaluation and 100 per cent inflation within two months at the duty station, whereas the text of the revised methodology does not identify such criteria; instead, it calls for flexibility. FICSA recalls that in the past there was flexibility in the adoption of special measures for Bhutan and Yemen in accordance with the methodology. Those provisions remain and should be applied. In the absence of a flexible approach, staff in Africa are requesting a review by a committee, with the participation of staff representatives, of the non-headquarters salary survey methodology and its application. FICSA seeks the support of Member States for a flexible approach to the application of special measures in order to ensure rapid assistance following economic crises.

VII. Recognition of language knowledge in the United Nations system

22. The knowledge of languages is of paramount importance in the United Nations system. The sharing of thoughts, views and perceptions and the creation of joint

understandings between nations is achieved through language. All those who subscribe to the ideals of the United Nations family, in particular the staff who serve the Member States, should be encouraged to increase their knowledge of languages. With this aim in view, the organizations of the United Nations system have developed and applied incentives for their staff to develop competence in more than one of the official and working languages. Where applied, such incentives are working well.

23. Following a recent review of the language recognition schemes in the United Nations system, the International Civil Service Commission, while stating that it supports language recognition schemes, nevertheless proposes the abolition of the existing schemes and their replacement by a scheme that offers less incentive to staff to increase their knowledge of languages. Its recommendation is in total contradiction to the requests of the administrations, which have adopted more progressive schemes and do not wish to be forced into taking a backward step in this regard.

24. FICSA strongly opposes the recommendation of ICSC for the following reasons:

(a) Language knowledge is not only used to carry out job responsibilities. It is used to communicate with colleagues, local communities and populations served in accordance with the Secretary-General's emphasis on strengthening ties with civil society, and with representatives of the Member States. It facilitates cultural diversity. The Commission has not addressed the issue of facilitating cultural diversity but has restricted itself to finding a cheaper way of recognizing an essential skill. Its recommendation may actually undermine cultural diversity since staff members will concentrate on language competence in one of the few commonly used languages within the United Nations system to the detriment of other languages;

(b) More than ever before, United Nations system organizations require a flexible workforce, not only within each organization but among the different organizations. Many organizations have placed new emphasis on mobility and rotation between headquarters and the field. Language competence is crucial to this kind of flexibility and mobility. The Commission's recommendation, insofar as it represents a deterioration in recognition of language competence, will not assist in the process of creating a flexible, mobile workforce;

(c) The Commission's recommendation will be very difficult to implement. Current language recognition schemes provide for a pensionable component to the remuneration package. Any attempt to remove this from staff members will mean a deterioration in their remuneration package that will be legally contested. Should the ICSC recommendation be adopted and applied with a phased-in approach, staff members who in the future demonstrate competency in a language of the organization will not be eligible for the same kind of recognition as their colleagues continue to receive. This will be perceived as discriminatory, and will certainly not act as an incentive to acquire competency in additional languages, particularly by those staff working in organizations that do not offer free language training programmes for all and for whom the acquisition of an additional language has already required a personal financial disbursement;

(d) FICSA believes that any approach to the strengthening of multiculturalism within United Nations organizations should build on and not undermine systems that are already in existence and working well. The way forward is through training and career development in the context of an organizational work environment that truly values and encourages language competence in staff.

25. FICSA requests that the existing language incentive schemes be retained and applied throughout United Nations system organizations.

VIII. Ethics in the international civil service

26. FICSA welcomes the action of the General Assembly, which responded, at least in part, to the concerns expressed by staff representatives about the proposed United Nations Code of Conduct. FICSA notes, however, that the Assembly has requested ICSC to update the 1954 Standards of Conduct in collaboration with CCAQ and in consultation with all interested parties.

27. In anticipation of the review of the 1954 Standards, FICSA would like to express some general and specific comments. First, FICSA would appreciate clarification on the circumstances that have led Member States to call for an update of the Standards since such clarification would help with the review. For example, if there is concern that increased collaboration with the private sector may require measures not heretofore considered necessary, a better approach may be to reconsider the modalities for working with the private sector rather than adopting repressive codes of conduct for the staff. The United Nations could refuse to do business with companies that have not adopted a code of business ethics. FICSA believes it important that any update of the Standards should result in integrity-based rather than compliance-based Standards, and should contain the

responsibilities and obligations not only of staff but also of organizations towards staff.

28. More specifically, the Federation reviewed the 1954 Standards to identify aspects that are relevant to elected staff representatives. Paragraphs 29 and 30 draw attention to the cultivation by the staff associations of a responsible understanding among their members of the obligations that the right of consultation carries with it, particularly in respect of the upholding of any agreements that may have been reached. Consultation within the United Nations system does not carry with it the obligation for an agreement to be reached between staff representatives and a decision-making body, either at the organizational or inter-agency level. If and when an actual agreement is reached, it should be binding on all parties, not only on staff representatives. FICSA requests that the Standards be revised to include a statement that agreements reached by consultation between staff representatives and decision-making bodies should be binding and respected by all those party to the agreement. Contrary to the statement in the 1954 Standards that participation by staff representatives in the actual debates of legislative bodies, for the purpose of upholding their views in opposition to those of the executive head, is clearly inadmissible, FICSA believes that staff representatives should have the right and obligation to present their views to legislative bodies that make the final decision on conditions of service. Staff representatives should also have the right to address the media on any issue concerning their conditions of service.

29. FICSA seeks the support of Member States to ensure that the Commission bears in mind the need for the Standards of Conduct to fully respect fundamental human and international labour rights for international civil servants.

IX. Conclusion

30. FICSA trusts that its views and requests will be heeded by the Fifth Committee. They have been submitted on behalf of the 30,000 staff members whom the Federation represents worldwide, and with the aim of strengthening the common vision and unity of purpose that lies at the heart of the United Nations system and that must continue.

Appendix

FICSA position paper on the report of the International Civil Service Commission for 1998

Code of Conduct

FICSA welcomes the decision of the General Assembly which responded, at least in part, to the concerns expressed by staff representatives on the United Nations Code of Conduct. FICSA notes that the General Assembly has asked ICSC to update the 1954 Standards of Conduct in collaboration with CCAQ and in consultation with all interested parties. In anticipation of such a review, FICSA has developed general and specific comments for the attention of Member States. These comments are contained in paragraphs 26 to 29 above.

Report of the Board of Auditors on the management review of the ICSC secretariat

FICSA believes that the report is not so much an audit of the functioning of the ICSC secretariat as a review of the United Nations salary system. However, the report confirms the Federation's view that ICSC is not functioning in the most efficient or effective way. FICSA notes that article 8.1 of the ICSC Statute states that "The Chairman shall direct the work of the Commission and its staff", which presumably also includes the secretariat. FICSA cannot comment on the work of the secretariat staff; the prevailing view in the Federation is that the problems lie with the Commission rather than with the competencies of the staff of the secretariat.

Specific technical comments are included in FICSA's detailed position paper on the audit report, which will be distributed to the Fifth Committee as a separate document.

Consultative process and working arrangements of the Commission

The report of the Working Group on the Consultative Process and Working Arrangements of the Commission can be reviewed in two parts. The first part, dealing with changes to the rules of procedure, has already been considered and decided upon by the Commission. The second part, dealing with the process of selection of members to the Commission, requires consideration by the General Assembly at its current session.

With regard to changes to the rules of procedure, FICSA was an observer to the discussion by the Commission but did not participate in the deliberations. FICSA acknowledges that progress has been achieved on areas dealing with agenda management, information-gathering and in the setting up of working groups on all key issues. However, FICSA was disappointed by some of the amendments made by the Commission to the proposals of the Working Group, notably in rules of procedure 6.1 and 12.2, and to paragraph 39 of the Working Group's report, which reflect a refusal on the part of the Commission to consider the administrations and staff as equal partners in the process of consultation.

The second part of the report of the Working Group requires consideration by Member States. FICSA urges Member States to adopt, at the current fifty-third session of the General Assembly, a position on the selection of members to the Commission that precludes political considerations from outweighing professional and substantive qualifications.

Remuneration of the Professional and higher categories

Base/floor salary scale

The adjustment of 2.48 per cent recommended by the Commission reflects an increase in the pay of the comparator; if approved, it will be absorbed by consolidating post adjustment multiplier points into the base salary on a no loss-no gain basis. FICSA takes note of the adjustment, while maintaining that salaries should be (a) based on those of the best paid national civil service (which the United States civil service is not); and (b) increased in real terms by at least 25 per cent to compensate for the loss of purchasing power over the past 15 years.

Evolution of the margin between the net remuneration of the United States federal civil service and that of the United Nations system

Because United Nations system pay is tied to United States federal civil service pay, which has been unable to compete with non-federal sector pay for many years, United Nations system Professional salaries have been dragged down. Margins at the higher levels of the United Nations salary scale are non-existent. In at least one duty station, net salaries at D-2, D-1 and P-5 levels were consistently below those of the comparator. ICSC has reported annually since 1995 that the current comparator is no longer the best remunerated national civil service. FICSA has proposed several options to address these issues: an across-the-board real salary increase; changing the comparator; and an increase in the margin range from 110-120 to 120-130, with an immediate adjustment of the range to its mid-point of 125.

Treatment of expatriation

FICSA agrees that there is no discernible decrease in the degree of expatriation over time, and that there is no justification to reduce the margin or entitlements related to expatriation. FICSA is carrying out a comparative study of expatriation benefits in the national civil services of key Member States. Preliminary findings indicate that the expatriation benefits for nationals of these Member States who are posted abroad are much higher than in the United Nations system.

Dependency allowances

FICSA supports the recommended increases in the children's and secondary dependant's allowances, which reflect the 14.6 per cent increase in the value of tax abatements and social legislation payments at seven headquarters duty stations between January 1996 and January 1998.

Post adjustment at the base of the common system

FICSA firmly opposes the elimination of post adjustment at the base of the system, and welcomes the Commission's statement that the current system of net base salary plus post adjustment at the base is still the most appropriate way to ensure that the margin remains within range. FICSA notes that the current technical measures for operating the post adjustment system within the approved range are proving operationally adequate.

Post adjustment at Geneva

FICSA agrees that there remain complex technical, legal and administrative difficulties that mitigate against the establishment of non-standard procedures for this duty station.

Remuneration of the General Service and other locally recruited categories

Decision of ILO Administrative Tribunal

FICSA was pleased with the Tribunal's ruling on the Rome language factor appeal, and believes it should also have been implemented for Vienna. FICSA firmly opposed the elimination of the language factor from the methodology, and sees the restoration of the pre-1992 text to be the only valid decision the Commission can make. Option (ii) is inadequate since it does not cover those cases where comparator firms do not require staff to work in a working language of the United Nations and job matches are therefore invalid.

Conditions of service applicable to both categories

Education grant

FICSA welcomes the recommended increases in the education grant applicable as from the school year in progress on 1 January 1999.

Recognition of language knowledge in the United Nations system

FICSA firmly opposes the recommendation to transform existing schemes to non-pensionable bonuses for the reasons outlined in paragraphs 22-25 above.

Common scale of staff assessment

FICSA agrees that the current staff assessment scale should continue to apply because the scale has only been in effect for one year and taxes have changed by only 0.5 per cent.

Staff assessment rates vis-à-vis local taxes

FICSA agrees that "the local practice approach" would not be appropriate. However, data on local pension schemes may be considered separately where it is a problem in a

particular duty station (e.g., Montreal), taking into account the complexity of the process.

Hazard pay

FICSA supports the increase to $1,000, and considers that the amount of hazard pay should be the same for all international and local staff working in high-risk duty stations since the risks are the same for everyone. It is essential to ensure equity in this area since the lives of all staff have the same value.

Standards of travel and per diem

FICSA agrees with all the ICSC decisions on this issue except for the one on home leave stopovers. FICSA considers that for travel on home leave, stopovers for only a duration of more than 12 hours is restrictive; FICSA would prefer to see the 12-hour ceiling lowered, especially for families with very young children.

Mission subsistence allowance

FICSA is not in favour of the use of MSA for staff serving on special non-family missions. Although expected to cover largely the same elements of expenditure, MSA rates are lower than DSA rates. FICSA sees this as a means of making savings at the expense of staff. While on mission, even if it is a special mission, staff members should be entitled to post adjustment, mobility and hardship allowance at their home duty stations, plus DSA.

Framework for human resources management

The Commission has not developed a framework for human resources management, in either the sense of an outline for comprehensive study of the field or the development of an inclusive system ready to be implemented. While FICSA appreciates the establishment of a working group to examine this issue, the participation of the staff will depend on the outcome of the proposals in the report of the Working Group on the Consultative Process and Working Arrangements of the Commission.

Gender balance in the United Nations system

FICSA is disappointed that the whole question of gender balance in the United Nations system is reduced merely to databases and recruitment sources. Although these are important elements, the issue of gender balance is wider, encompassing career development and a work/family agenda. Furthermore, FICSA expresses its concern that the three elements used in the selection of staff – highest standards of competence and efficiency, geographical distribution and gender balance – sometimes conflict, and there are no guidelines to assess objectively the weight and priority given to each. This undermines the transparency of the selection process.

Capacity-building for change management

FICSA notes that recent surveys carried out by Runzheimer International show that in the private sector, the average three-year international assignment carries a $1 million price tag and a staggering 50 per cent failure rate. United Nations system staff, by comparison, are much more successful at working in a multicultural setting. FICSA supports efforts to strengthen appreciation of diversity, and is against measures that will work against this aim, e.g., the ICSC recommendations on recognition of language knowledge in the United Nations system.

United Nations A/C.5/53/28

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 October 1998
English
Original: Spanish

Fifty-third session
Fifth Committee
Agenda item 118
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 22 October 1998 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, for appropriate action by the Fifth Committee, a letter dated 19 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, containing a request for exemption from the application of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Didier **Opertti**

98-31666 (E) 221098 221098

Annex

Letter dated 19 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

On 6 August 1990, the Security Council imposed sweeping sanctions on Iraq under its resolution 661 (1990), which, *inter alia*, prohibited Iraq from exporting goods of any kind and froze its assets abroad. These sanctions did not permit Iraq to obtain funds for the purchase of food and medicine, let alone for the payment of its contributions to international organizations.

For the first three years following the imposition of sanctions, Iraq paid its assessed contribution to the budget of the United Nations in local currency (Iraqi dinars), and the United Nations used these funds for disbursements on its premises and activities in Iraq. Since the end of 1992, however, the United Nations, having relocated most of its activities away from Iraq, the Organization has refused to accept Iraq's contribution in Iraqi dinars on the grounds that it has no activities on which disbursements can be made inside Iraq in Iraqi currency. It thus requested that the contribution in question be paid in convertible currency.

In view of Iraq's inability to pay its contribution in hard currency, given that it does not have the necessary financial resources owing to the comprehensive embargo being maintained against it, the contributions due from it came to exceed the permitted amount and it was deprived of its vote in the General Assembly at the beginning of 1995.

Since that time, Iraq has been endeavouring by the means prescribed and with all the required flexibility to present its request for exemption from the provisions of Article 19 of the Charter until such time as the sanctions are lifted, in full or in part. Certain States members of the Committee on Contributions, however, have been obstructing this endeavour for political reasons.

Iraq is one of the founding Members of the United Nations, and since the Organization was established it has paid its assessed contributions with regularity and has made many voluntary contributions to United Nations humanitarian, social and cultural activities. Iraq is currently being prevented from paying its share of the budget of the United Nations because it is being deprived of its financial resources and prevented from obtaining food and medicine for its people for a reason that is beyond its control. We are therefore submitting this request that Iraq be exempted from the provisions of Article 19 of the Charter until such time as the sanctions being maintained against it are lifted, either partially or completely.

(*Signed*) Nizar **Hamdoon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative